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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: GAZA UNDER TWO SEIGES; OMAN JOURNALIST
THRIVES AT AL HURRA; AMERICA'S IMAGE ABROAD

¶1. SUMMARY: The editorial in private Arabic daily "Al Zaman" commented that Fatah leader Abbas is pressuring Hamas for a truce. Private youth-oriented Arabic daily "Al Shabiba" praised an Omani journalist working for Al Hurra TV, saying that Omani journalists can demonstrate their true talent in free media environments. Arabic state daily "Oman" highlighted the recent naming of James Glassman as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and commented on his mission to improve America's image abroad. END SUMMARY.

GAZA UNDER TWO SEIGES

¶2. In a January 28 editorial, "Al Zaman" (new; no circulation yet released; widely distributed) said that Gaza is in a bind between Abbas' interests to control the Rafah boarder and Israel's continued pressure. "Scenario of Siege" said:

"Fatah wants full control over Gaza's borders; however, it does not know how to deal with the Egyptian border situation and is not able to provide a normal life to Gaza... In the end, Israel may succeed in subduing Gaza, given Abbas's focus on removing Hamas from Gaza. This means Palestinians shedding more Palestinian blood with Gaza under two sieges: Abbas' and Israel's."

Omani Journalist Thrives in Free Media Environment

¶3. On January 29, "Al Shabiba" (circulation 20,000) praised the quality of an Omani reporter's work at Al Hurra TV. "An Eye on Democracy and Migrant Birds" said:

"When a journalist moves from a restrictive TV channel to one that provides freedom and encourages confidence, that journalist might turn into one of the best. This is true of Muhammad Al Yahyai, an Omani journalist who moved to Al Hurrah and built a reputation through his program "Eye on Democracy". The program openly addresses sensitive topics in the Arab world and discusses issues never dealt with before. His program sheds light on current debates on democratic transformation in the Arab world and on challenges of political reforms. Al Yahyai also tackles human rights, the rights of women and children, and civil society. He conducts thoughtful interviews with officials, professionals, activists and parliament members. Al Yahyai is opening up issues that many others are trying to ignore in the Arab region. His intellect, knowledge of the

issues, and courage surpass the ordinary. The only problem is that Arab viewers do not accept Al Hurra. If he were to air his program from Al Jazeera, it would receive the appropriate attention."

ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR AMERICA'S IMAGE

¶4. The state-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) commented on January 30 that the Bush administration has done all it can to improve America's image abroad, to little effect, in "From Hughes to Glassman ... and Trials to Improve America's Image":

"Again Bush is looking for faces to polish his country's image. After the resignation of Karen Hughes, another candidate has taken the position of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy. Perhaps he might succeed where Hughes failed. If Glassman, though, chooses to use deception to change America's reputation, he is doomed to fail, for America continues to pursue the same strategies and policies. As long as America says one thing and does the opposite, its image will never be positive. Instead, it will only increase the world's hatred of its policies and continue to isolate itself."

GRAPPO